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Research indicates noise helps pain

DENVER (AP) — Researchers claim to have found that static noise helps curb pain. A noise resembling FM radio static, called "pink sound," can replace pain-killing drugs for some patients suffering from cancer, arthritis and other diseases, researchers in Denver and Afton, Va., claim.

The researchers say "pink sound" produces none of the addiction and unpleasant side effects of many pain-killing drugs.

But Joyce Thomson, coordinator of physical medicine and rehabilitation at the Boulder Memorial Hospital pain clinic, said she is skeptical.

"Pain is a popular subject these days and there are all sorts of people trying to cash in on it," she said, adding that she attended a presentation of a sound device, but "it seemed pretty hokey."

The Denver-based pink-sound research team is headed by Frank Sullivan, who said, "Academics are skeptical, but the man in the street is tremendously open to it. To me, what works, works."

Rae Bowman, a Topeka, Kan., engineer still bedridden at Denver's Mercy Medical Center following surgery for cancer, said the "pink sound," in conjunction with breathing exercises, counting patterns and a series of associations taught by a psychiatrist, can minimize severe pain for periods of three to five hours.

Robert Monroe, who heads the Monroe Institute of Applied Sciences in Afton, Va., said the right and left hemispheres of the brain will produce the same kind of electrical impulses at the same time when various carefully selected sound pulses are transmitted through earphones to a patient.

The effect of the equalized sound pulses, described as sounding like static between radio stations on an FM radio dial, surf on a beach or rain on a roof, depending on frequencies used, create "an expansion of consciousness but not an alteration," Monroe says.

Monroe, a former vice president of the Mutual Broadcasting Network, says that, so far, "pink sound" generally has been "a last-resort kind of situation...."